A WARREN MAGAZINE

CREEPY #76

JAN. 1976

MACABRE CLASSICS TO TINGLE THE IMAGINATION!

CREEPY

$1.00

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A GRIM DEATH SENT FROM HELL CLAIMS A YOUNG GIRL'S SOUL...

...WHEN SHE LEARNS THE TERRIBLE TRUTH BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION OF OUR COUNTRY'S PRESIDENTS!

PLUS: EDGAR ALLAN POE'S "IMP OF THE PERVERSE!"

AND: DEVILS! DEMONS! VAMPIRES! ALIENS AND CANNIBALS!

WELCOME, TO YOUR UNCLE CREEPY'S HALLOWEEN PARTY.
GHOSTS, ALIENS, MONSTERS, IMPS, A COUPLE OF VAMPIRES... AND YOU!
A VOLATILE COMBINATION, EH KIDDIES?
SO GET YOURSELVES TOGETHER. IT'S GONNA BE REALLY SPECIAL!
ART: WALT SIMONSON & BERNI WRIGHTSON

OUR COVER
A bicentennial tribute? A mate for the headless horseman? Or a hideous apparition of Halloween horror? A CREEPY cover masterpiece by the great, inimitable Enrich!

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CREEPY®

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5 **GOODBYE, MR. LINCOLN** Abe Lincoln. Collins. John Kennedy. What did these three great men have in common? A little black slave boy living in squalor. His dying wish. And a soul preserved by black magic for all eternity . . . seeking revenge!

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41 **IN DARKNESS IT SHALL END** Peter stared horrified at Rowena's slashed throat. He had loved her, as did his rival, Ruger. Now she was dead! And only the grave had won. A logical assumption that nearly cost Peter his very life!

51 **IMP OF THE PERVERSE** A wayward spirit haunts humanity. It makes people do wicked, senseless things . . . simply because they are forbidden. So I trembled, but gleefully. For I was tempted to commit the most fearsome crime of all. Murder!

CONCERNING OUR MAIL ORDER ADVERTISEMENTS: Warren Publishing Co. guarantees the delivery and satisfaction of all items advertised in this issue. Should you need to write us concerning an order, whether it be from our address or a Post Office Box address, send your letter to: E.C. Ives, Customer Service Dept., Warren Publishing Co., 145 E. 32nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

Dear Uncle Creepy...

CREEPY #74, an all **Reed Crandall** issue, was one of **Warren Publishing's** best ideas yet! If anyone deserves an entire issue all to himself, **Crandall** does!

My gripe is with "The Beast on Bacon Street!"

I liked that story a lot when it first appeared in EERIE many years ago. I was eagerly perusing its brand new coat of many colors when I noticed the balloons. Something was different. The wording just wasn't familiar. So I looked it up!

And sure enough, the entire story had been re-written! Why?

TIM BEER
Staten Island, N.Y.

Good question, Tim. And the following letter by Louis Grifty answers your question ...and more!

Not only did you color **Bill Parente's** "The Wrong Tenant," which first appeared in EERIE #24. You also had **Budd Lewis** re-write the dialogue. You even gave it a brand new **title!**

"The Beast on Bacon Street," this beautifully revamped version of the old **Parente/Reed Crandall** tale, appeared in all-**Crandall** CREEPY #74. And it worked!

Which is not to say that **Parente's** original story didn't! His basic plot, carefully delineated by **Crandall's** story telling techniques, was obviously in effect. But similarities stopped there.

Where **Parente** had used dialogue almost exclusively for plot modification, **Lewis'** more sophisticated, more **modern** script led to fuller characterization and more believable, better-defined action.

Parente's original was published in 1969. In the intervening six years, the **Warren** approach to storytelling has changed. For the better!

It's interesting to have samples of both the old and new approach coupled with the same fabulous **Crandall** art!

LOUIS GRIFTY
New Orleans, La.

CREEPY #74! **Nine** whole stories. What largess!

I hope to see as many in all the future issues of CREEPY!

PETER REYNOLDS
Chelmsford, Mass.

Ah, for the good old days! CREEPY #74 and **Reed Crandall** brought them home again!

ALLEN WHITE
Bend, Ore.

I almost never read comics any more. In fact, I've been so busy with school work that I hardly ever read **anything** I don't have to.

But when I saw CREEPY #74 on the stands, I just had to pick it up. Along with **Archie Goodwin's** horror stories and **Frank Frazatta's** spectacular covers, **Reed Crandall's** superb comic art represents what I remember best, and consider best, about the way CREEPY used to be.

For some reason, I've remembered **Crandall's** "Vampires Fly at Dusk," his "Curse of the Full Moon!" and especially, his haunting "Hop Frog," for a good many years.

It was good to see these old friends again ...and to realize that they are, indeed, as good as I remembered them to be.

MIKE NIDNOV
Baltimore, Md.

Of course, I've heard a lot about the early CREEPY issues ...and about **Reed Crandall.** But this is one of the few times that I've actually seen his work reproduced!

And it is just as dramatic as I had heard it would be.

JOAN BASSE
Philadelphia, Pa.

I read CREEPY #74 and what a disappointment! Not that you re-printed **Reed Crandall's** artwork from previous CREEPYs ...that I can **understand!**

But why would you try the old "solo artist issue" gambit so soon after your previous fiascos along the same lines?

So why try it again! Even with an artist of **Mr. Crandall's** stature? Single artist issues, especially those full of reprint material, just don't **work!**

WOLFGANG GRAPER
Newark, Del.

Excitement. Drama. Suspense. And nostalgia? That's what CREEPY #74, Warren's all Reed Crandall special issue, evoked! Ah, for the good old days of CREEPY Magazine!

Within one year CREEPY has presented us with two different adaptations of the **Edgar Allan Poe** classic, "A Cask of Amontillado."

It's kinda interesting putting the two stories side by side. Each adaptation has a different style and pacing.

I found the mood created by **Reed Crandall's** stark black and white line much more chilling than that evoked by **Salvador's** tone work. The pacing was more exciting in **Crandall's** story also. The art was inspired, imaginative.

When **Fortunato** is finally walled into the tomb ...when the final brick has been placed ...there is nothing left in the panel but darkness ...and the cry, "For the love of God, **Montressor!" Fabulous!**

My main complaint against the **Crandall** version concerns the ending. I was sorry that **Arcie Goodwin** wrote a tag page onto the end of Poe's story. **Fortunto** is revenged. But **Poe's** chilling ending is diluted.

JOHN BASKIN
Houston, Tex.

The 1975 Warren Awards are coming around again. And how in the world you guys are going to choose the best from among the fantastic variety **Warren** has given us this year, is beyond me. I know what I like, of course. But somehow, my choices seem less earth shattering.

I realize I haven't yet seen all the magazines for 1975. Nevertheless, I have awarded the 1975 **Dubois Award** as follows:

Best Cover ...CREEPY #73, **Ken Kelly's** spectacular robot! Phenominal! Or maybe EERIE #64 ...with **Kelly's** waring Exterminators!

Best Art ...the all **El Cid** EERIE #66 by **Gonzalo Mayo!**

Best Artist/Writer ...**Berni Wrightson?** He's the only one at **all** this year!

Best Story ...**Bruce Bezaire's Jackass** series!

Best All Around Artist ...**Jose Ortiz** ...or maybe **Berni Wrightson.**

Best All Around Writer ...**Budd Lewis.**

These are the artists, writers ...art and stories **I'd** pick if I were giving out awards. Did I come **close?**

RICK DUBOIS
Queens, N.Y.

You'll have to wait and see, Rick, just like everybody else. But what about the rest of you readers? If you were Warren Publishing, how would you hand out the 1975 Warren Awards? We'd really like to see!

opinions? write...!

DEAR UNCLE CREEPY

c/o Warren Publishing
145 E. 32nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10016

Goodbye, MR. LINCOLN

STORY: BILL DuBAY / ART: JOSE ORTIZ

CALM DOWN, LADY! WHATEVER IT IS... IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD!
SO SOMEONE WAS FOLLOWING YOU! YOU'RE SAFE NOW! NO ONE'S GOING TO ATTACK YOU IN A POLICE STATION!

T-THAT'S NOT ALL THERE IS TO IT, SERGEANT! HIM... IT... OUT THERE! WHATEVER IT IS, WILL KILL ME IF I TELL YOU...!
TELL US WHAT, LADY?

T-THEY KILLED HIM TODAY, SERGEANT. T-THREW HIM OUT OF A W-WINDOW!

LADY, I'VE BEEN ON THAT CASE ALL DAY, AND HAVEN'T HAD LEAD ONE TO GO ON!
I'M THE OFFICER THAT FOUND YOUR SON'S BODY!
COME WITH ME AND TELL ME EVERY-THING YOU KNOW!

START FROM THE BEGINNING, LADY! WE DON'T EVEN KNOW THE VICTIM'S... YOUR KID'S NAME!

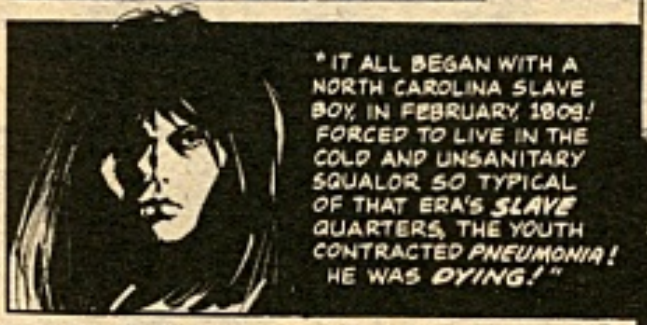
HE WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN!

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME, MA'AM!
FOR A MOMENT... I ALMOST THOUGHT YOU MEANT YOUR SON WAS HONEST ABE... THE PRESIDENT!

THAT'S WHAT I DO MEAN, LIEUTENANT!

MY SON WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES!
HE HAD SEVERAL OTHER NAMES TOO... INCLUDING JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY!

LADY, IF YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH, THEN I DON'T THINK THIS IS THE BEGINNING!
YOU'RE RIGHT, LIEUTENANT! I MAY AS WELL EXPLAIN IT ALL...SOMEONE HAS TO KNOW, DESPITE THE CONSEQUENCES I'LL SUFFER FOR TELLING!


"IT ALL BEGAN WITH A NORTH CAROLINA SLAVE BOY, IN FEBRUARY, 1809! FORCED TO LIVE IN THE COLD AND UNSANITARY SQUALOR SO TYPICAL OF THAT ERA'S SLAVE QUARTERS, THE YOUTH CONTRACTED PNEUMONIA! HE WAS DYING!"

"HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING FOR THEIR SON, THE YOUTH'S PARENTS SUMMONED AN OLD WOMAN... RUMORED TO BE A PRACTITIONER OF THE BLACK ARTS!"

"THE OLD WOMAN KNEW SHE COULD DO NOTHING TO RESTORE THE BOY TO HEALTH! YET SHE TOOK PITY ON HIM AND PROMISED HER HELP!"
IF YOU COULD HAVE ANYTHING, BENJAMIN, WHAT WOULD YOU WANT TO EASE YOUR SUFFERING?
I-I WANT NOTHING FOR MYSELF...! B-BUT FOR MY FAMILY... MY PEOPLE... I WANT A BETTER LIFE! I WISH I COULD LIVE TO BRING FREEDOM TO BLACK AMERICANS...!

THAT I CAN GIVE YOU, BENJAMIN!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND! IF YOU CAN'T MAKE HIM WELL, HOW CAN YOU HELP HIM LIVE FOR HIS PEOPLE?
BELIEVE IN THE BLACK ARTS, BETHEDRA...! THEY ARE POWERFUL!

"ALL NIGHT SHE WORKED HER SPELLS OVER THE STILL BODY OF THE BOY! FOR IN TRUTH, SHE WAS AN EMISSARY OF THE EVIL FORCES OF SATAN! YET ALL REALIZED HER LABOR WAS GOOD... NOT EVIL!"

"THEN EARLY THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 12, 1809, THE BOY DIED!"

"YET DESPITE HIS SUFFERING, THE BOY'S BODY RESTED WITH A SMILE THAT WOULD REMAIN ETERNALLY!

THE BOY SEEMED TO KNOW THAT WITH HIS DEATH, HIS PEOPLE WOULD PROSPER... WOULD BE RELEASED FROM THEIR CHAINS!"

H-HE'S NOT GONE! HE'S WITH US MORE NOW THAN BEFORE!

"WITH THE BOY'S DEATH, LIFE FORCES DEPARTED HIS BODY AND SOUGHT OUT A FRESH FORM, CLEANSED BY BIRTH!"

CONGRATULATIONS, NANCY! YOU'VE JUST BORNE A FINE NEW SON!

"THAT MORNING ON FEBRUARY 12, 1809, AN INSIGNIFICANT SLAVE BOY SUCCUMBED TO PNEUMONIA IN THE WILDS OF NORTH CAROLINA! WHILE MOMENTS LATER AND SEVERAL STATES AWAY, THE LIFE-FORCE OF THAT SAME BOY RE-ENTERED THE WORLD IN A LOG CABIN JUST OUTSIDE HODGENVILLE KENTUCKY! A SON WAS BORN TO THOMAS AND NANCY LINCOLN!"

I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU THE STORY OF HOW THAT BOY GREW UP TO BECOME THE SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, LIEUTENANT!

ABRAHAM LINCOLN FREED THE SLAVES DURING THE CIVIL WAR, AND FULFILLED AN INSIGNIFICANT YOUNG BLACK BOY'S WISH!

THAT'S SOME TALL TALE, LADY!

EVEN IF I BELIEVED WHAT YOU'VE SAID SO FAR, I STILL DON'T SEE HOW YOUR SON FITS INTO IT ALL.

IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, LIEUTENANT! BUT I'M COMING TO THAT!

"DO YOU REMEMBER THE DATE LINCOLN DIED, LIEUTENANT? APRIL 14, 1865...HE WAS SHOT! SWIFTLY... AND VIOLENTLY! IT WAS ALMOST AS THOUGH DARK FORCES WERE AT WORK."

"THE SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT DIED THE NEXT MORNING... APRIL 15, ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE A SON WAS BORN TO LUCIUS AND BEBE COLLINS IN OLD FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA!"

"THE ENTITY OF A SLAVE BOY BECAME THE GREATEST BLACK LEADER TO COME OUT OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD... MATHEW COLLINS!"

"IF YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH BLACK HISTORY, LIEUTENANT, YOU KNOW THAT MATHEW COLLINS FOUGHT TO END RECONSTRUCTION CARPETBAGGING, AND THE BLACK EXPLOITATION THAT WAS RAMPANT IN THE SOUTH DURING THE 80'S AND 90'S!"

"HE LED EX-SLAVES AND THEIR SONS IN ILLEGALLY ORGANIZED UNIONS WHICH PROMOTED BLACK EDUCATION, BLACK CAPITALISM AND BLACK JUSTICE!"
"IN SOMEWHAT MORE VIOLENT METHODS THAN THOSE HE HAD EMPLOYED IN HIS FORMER BODY, COLLINS CONTINUED TO ASSIST HIS PEOPLE AS HE HAD REQUESTED ON A DEATHBED NEARLY A HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE!"

"WHEN AMERICA ENTERED THE GREAT WAR, APRIL 6, 1917, THE GOVERNMENT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BLACKS BY TURNING MOST AWAY WHEN THEY APPLIED FOR MILITARY DUTY."
"THOSE WHO WERE ACCEPTED WERE PLACED IN SPECIAL 'DETENTION' PLATOONS AND SAW 'ACTION' IN MESS HALLS AND LATRINES. ON MAY 29, COLLINS LED BLACKS IN A MARCH ON WASHINGTON, PROTESTING MILITARY RACISM!"

"THE MARCHERS WERE DISPELLED AND ONLY ONE SHOT WAS FIRED... INTO THE HEAD OF MATHEW COLLINS!"
"ONCE AGAIN A VIOLENT ACT WAS TO CAUSE THE DEATH OF THE REINCARNATED SLAVE BOY!"

"BUT EVEN AS THE PRESIDENT BREATHED HIS LAST IN THAT DALLAS HOSPITAL, I WAS GIVING BIRTH IN OLD TOWN, MAINE...!"

"...TO A BEAUTIFUL BABY BOY!"

"FROM THE FIRST DAY IN THE DELIVERY ROOM, I REALIZED DANIEL WASN'T LIKE OTHER BABIES! AS HE GREW, I SAW IN HIM THE MAKINGS OF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH STRENGTH AND CHARACTER!"

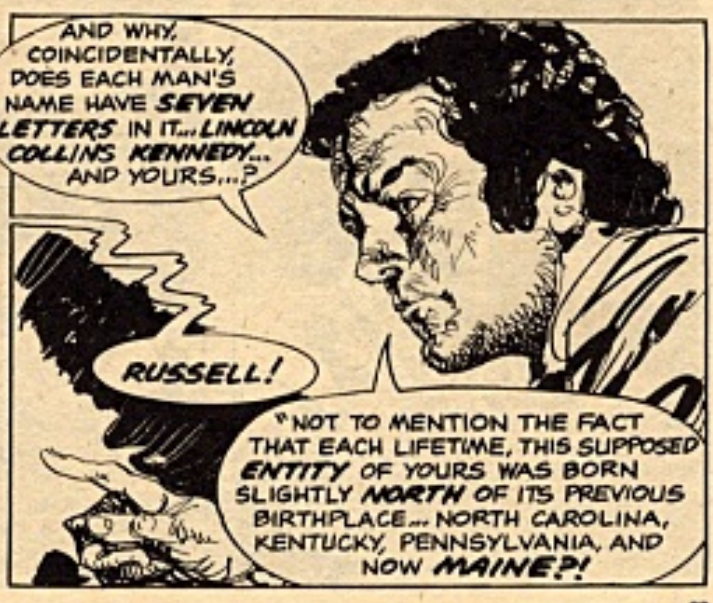
"FROM THE TIME HE COULD SPEAK, DANIEL WOULD TELL ME STORIES ABOUT HIS OTHER LIVES! AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST HIS FANTASY...!"

"BUT WHEN HE CONTINUED THE REFERENCES TO EVENTS IN THE TIME OF LINCOLN, COLLINS, AND KENNEDY, I BEGAN TO CHECK, AND FOUND TOO MANY SMALL DETAILS HE COULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN ABOUT."

THE ACCURACY OF TIMES AND DATES WAS WHAT FIRST CAUGHT MY ATTENTION! THEN THE PATTERN OF IT ALL STRUCK ME...
...EACH LIFE 'FIT' WITH THOSE PRECEEDING IT! EACH HAD TOO MANY SIMILARITIES WITH THE OTHERS TO BE MERELY COINCIDENTAL!

EACH MAN LIVED FOR CIVIL RIGHTS! AND EACH DIED IN THE ONLY WAY ONE WOULD THINK IT POSSIBLE TO KILL A CONTINUALLY REINCARNATED BEING...WITH WOUNDS IN THE HEAD!

EACH, TOO, WAS CONNECTED IN SOME WAY WITH THE WHITE HOUSE...TWO BEING OCCUPANTS, AND COLLINS DYING ON THE GROUNDS!
JUST SUPPOSING YOUR STORY WERE TRUE, LADY...THERE ARE A LOT OF OTHER COINCIDENCES YOU DIDN'T MENTION! WHY WAS EACH INCARNATION IN THIS COUNTRY? WHY NOT EUROPE, ASIA OR AFRICA?


AND WHY, COINCIDENTALLY, DOES EACH MAN'S NAME HAVE SEVEN LETTERS IN IT...LINCOLN COLLINS KENNEDY... AND YOURS...?
RUSSELL!
"NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT EACH LIFETIME, THIS SUPPOSED ENTITY OF YOURS WAS BORN SLIGHTLY NORTH OF ITS PREVIOUS BIRTHPLACE... NORTH CAROLINA, KENTUCKY, PENNSYLVANIA, AND NOW MAINE?!

THOSE ARE ALL QUESTIONS THAT FILLED MY MIND AT ONE TIME, TOO, LIEUTENANT!
BUT WITH DANIEL'S HELP, EVERYTHING FELL INTO PLACE!

DANIEL EXPLAINED THAT IN EACH OF HIS PREVIOUS LIFETIMES, HE WATCHED THE FORCES OF SATAN BUILDING UP! THE BLACK MAN WAS A PRIMARY TARGET, BEING BRED AMONGST FILTH, WASTE AND OPPRESSION!
NOT ONLY WAS MY SON A CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED BLACK MAN IN EACH LIFETIME, BUT HE WAS A CRUSADER FOR RIGHT... INDIRECTLY OPPOSING ALL EVIL FORCES!

NOW THAT IS A TWIST... AN UNDYING ENTITY CREATED BY BLACK MAGIC, INDISCRIMINATELY BATTLING ALL THAT IS EVIL!
WHICH IS PRECISELY WHERE THE NAMES LINCOLN, COLLINS, KENNEDY AND RUSSELL FIT IN... EACH HAVING SEVEN LETTERS! SEVEN... THE NUMBER OF THE LORD OR GOODNESS IN ALL ANCIENT SCRIPTURES!

AND ALL THE FIRST NAMES USED BY THE ENTITY... BENJAMIN, ABRAHAM, MATHEW, JOHN, AND NOW DANIEL...?
ALL FROM SCRIPTURES! ALL FOES OF SATAN!

AND WHAT OF THE NORTHWARD PATH THESE INCARNATIONS SEEM TO BE TAKING?
NORTH... OR UPWARDS... THE DIRECTION WE TURN OUR EYES WHEN PRAYING TO OUR SAVIOR... OR UP, LIKE THE NORTH STAR OVER BETHLEHEM THAT CHRISTMAS NIGHT 2000 YEARS AGO!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, LADY? THAT YOUR KID WAS SOME KIND OF A GOD?
NOTHING LIKE THAT. HE WAS BACKED BY THE FORCES OF GOOD... FORCES WE CAN ONLY HINT AT, WHOSE PURPOSE HAS BEEN TO FIGHT EVIL!

ALL RIGHT LADY! I'M WITH YOU SO FAR... NOT SAYING I BELIEVE YOU... BUT I'M WITH YOU!
NOW JUST WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO YOUR SON, DANIEL, TODAY? WHY IS HE DEAD?

"THAT BEGAN YESTERDAY EVENING, LIEUTENANT! DANIEL WAS APPREHENSIVE AND TOLD ME WE'D BE HAVING VISITORS! THEN, TWO MEN CAME TO THE DOOR...!
ARE YOU DANIEL RUSSELL, KID?
Y...YES!
WE'RE FROM THE LAW... WE'VE A WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST!
WHA--!
RUN MOTHER! T-THEY'RE EVIL!
SZZZZAP!
THEY'RE SENT BY THE DEVIL! UGGGGNN!
STOP, YA FOOL KID!
W-WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY BOY?
HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT, LADY! OUR "BOSS" WANTS TO SEE HIM!
Y-YOUR BOSS?! JUST WHO ARE YOU?
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE US IF WE TOLD YOU...!
WE WERE TAKEN TO THE BUILDING WHERE YOU FOUND DANIEL... THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR!
WAIT A MINUTE! THERE IS NO THIRTEENTH FLOOR IN THAT BUILDING! WE'VE ALREADY CHECKED THAT!
"BUT THERE IS, LIEUTENANT! AND ONLY ONE ELEVATOR WILL TAKE YOU TO IT! WE WERE TAKEN INTO A LARGE DARK OFFICE...!"
THE BOSS WILL SEE YOU MOMENTARILY!

"WE DIDN'T HAVE TO WAIT LONG! IN A CLOUD OF SMOKE, A MONSTER APPEARED BEFORE US...!"
YOU'VE MADE ME WAIT A LONG TIME TO MEET YOU, MR. LINCOLN-COLLINS-KENNEDY!
HUH?
"...HIS EYES GLOWED WITH A REDDISH FIRE THAT BURNED RIGHT THROUGH ME!"

"HE ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO DANIEL... AND IT WAS THEN I BELIEVED EVERY WORD MY SON HAD SPOKEN ABOUT HIS PREVIOUS LIVES!"
AT YOUR HANDS I HAVE RECEIVED MORE TEMPORARY SETBACKS THAN ANY OTHER MORTAL HAS CAUSED ME!

YOU HAVE BEEN A MOST WORTHY FOE! BUT I HAVE BIG PLANS FOR THE COMING DECADE! I'M READY TO LAUNCH THE LARGEST CAMPAIGN OF SATANIC EVIL MAN HAS EVER WITNESSED!
I CANNOT HAVE YOU AROUND, INTERFERING!

YOU MUST BE ELIMINATED NOW, BEFORE YOU REACH MATURITY WITHIN THIS LIFETIME!
NO! DON'T HARM MY BABY!

GET HER OUT OF HERE! SHE'S NO THREAT TO US!
NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE HER STORY OF DEVILS AND DEMONS IF SHE DARED TO SPEAK!
SHE WILL NOT SPEAK IF SHE VALUES HER LIFE AS SELFISH HUMANS DO!

NO! LET ME STAY WITH DANNY! DON'T HARM HIM! PLEASE!
GO, MOTHER...WHILE YOU CAN! THEY CAN DO ME NO HARM!

"I WAITED IN THE SHADOWS OUTSIDE THE BUILDING ALL NIGHT LONG... HOPING FOR A CHANCE TO REGAIN ENTRANCE! BUT THE TWO MUSCLEMEN BLOCKED MY WAY!"
NOOOOO!

"I MUST HAVE DOZED, BECAUSE THE NEXT THING I REMEMBER, IT WAS DAYLIGHT! I LOOKED UP AT THE SUN AND SAW... DANNY!!
MY GOD! NOOOOO!!

DANNY! DANNY! NOOOOO!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MRS. RUSSELL! IT'S OVER NOW! CRY! GET IT OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM!
SOB: I-I'M AFRAID... I DON'T... REMEMBER A-ANYTHING... AFTER THAT...!
SHE MUST'VE BEEN WANDERING AROUND IN SHOCK ALL DAY, LIEUTENANT, I'LL CALL THE DOC!

I'LL GO, DAEMON! I'D BETTER CALL THE COMMISSIONER WHILE I'M AT IT! IF THIS STORY IS ONE-TENTH TRUE, SHE'LL NEED A NEFTY BIT OF PROTECTION!
NOT TO MENTION THAT WE'LL BE FACING THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO EVER CONFRONT A MERE POLICE FORCE!

STAY WITH HER, DAEMON! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF HER, LIEUTENANT!

T-THANK YOU FOR STAYING WITH ME, SERGEANT! I-I'LL BE ALL RIGHT, NOW.

IT'S JUST... T-THE SHOCK...!
I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY, MRS. RUSSELL!

SHOCK DOES QUEER THINGS TO PEOPLE'S MINDS!
I-I'LL SAY! I'M STILL FRIGHTENED. I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HAVE THE COURAGE TO COME TO THE POLICE WITH MY STORY!

NOR DID WE, MRS. RUSSELL!
HUH?!
NOOOO! Y-YOU'RE ONE OF THEM?!

"WE" ARE EVERYWHERE, MRS. RUSSELL! BUT THEN I THOUGHT YOU KNEW THAT!
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE WORLD WILL FACE THE BIGGEST CATALYST OF EVIL EVER WITNESSED BY MANKIND...!

BUT BEFORE THE WORLD, MRS. RUSSELL... THERE'S... YOU!!
NOW THAT'S THE KIND OF ENDING THAT REALLY TEARS ME UP! THAT BLEEDING HEART, MRS. RUSSELL, JUST COULDN'T STAND TO SEE THOSE LITTLE DEVILS GETTING A HEAD! HERS!

WHAT IS THE REAL MEANING OF FEAR? ARNOLD WALDON IS ABOUT TO...FIND OUT!

PROLOGUE

THESE WALLS ARE *REALLY WHACKED OUT!* THEY'RE *NOT* EXACTLY *METAL*...

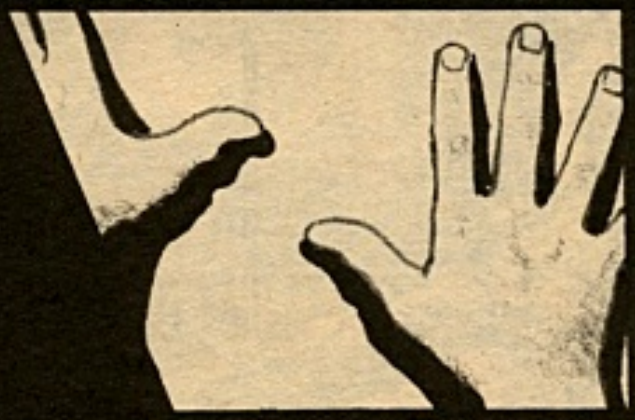
...AND THEY'RE *NOT* EXACTLY *PLASTIC* EITHER! *WEIRD!*

LIKE *NOTHIN'* I'VE SEEN ON *E-EARTH!*

OH, WOW! IT JUST *HIT* ME!

I-I KNOW WHAT THIS PLACE *IS!* OH, *GOD!*

DEAR SWEET *JEEZUZ! I-I... KNOW!*



I KNOW! I KNOW! I KNOW
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I KNOW! I KNOW! I KNOW
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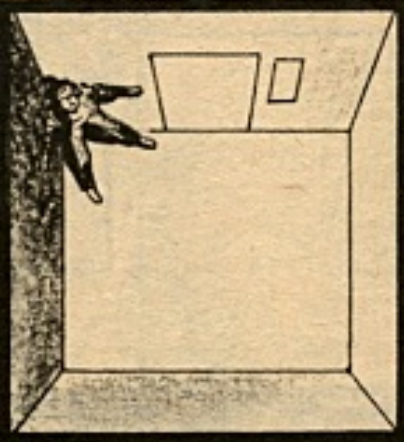
I KNOW! I KNOW! I KNOW
I KNOW! I KNOW! I KNOW

ENSNARED!



ALEX TOTH

STORY: RICH MARGOPOULOS / ART: ALEX TOTH

THIS IS ALL A TEST OF SOME SORT. A LAB EXPERIMENT! AN' I'M THE GUINEA PIG!
WELL... DIG IT, MAN...
I DON'T WANT NO PART OF IT!
I DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE... BUT YOU AIN'T GONNA DO THIS TO ME! NO WAY!
IT'S WRONG! I'M A HUMAN BEING...
...A THINKING, INTELLIGENT MAN! NOT A STUPID, MAZE-RUNNING ANIMAL!
SO, OPEN TH' DAMNED DOOR! LET ME OUT!
BAM
BAM

IT'S NO **USE!** I'M **STUCK** HERE! **TRAPPED!**

BUTTONS! THE **RIGHT COMBINATION** OF THESE TEN BUTTONS MUST **OPEN** THE DOOR!

AND TO GET ME TO **DO IT,** WHOEVER **RIGGED** THIS SHOW **MUST** HAVE A **REWARD** WAITING ON THE **OTHER SIDE!**

BUT WHAT COULD IT **BE?**

FOOD! IT'S **GOT** TO BE **FOOD!**

THEY HAVEN'T EVEN **TRIED** TO FEED ME!

AND I'M **STARVING!**

BUT **WAIT!** WHAT GOOD IS **THAT?**

I'D BE **MORE** MOTIVATED IF WHAT I WAS AFTER WAS THE **OPPOSITE SEX...**

...A BUNDLE OF FOXY **DYNAMITE!**

SURE! THAT'S **IT!**

I'LL **BET** THERE'S A **NEAT** LI'L **LADY** BEHIND THE DOOR! **HMMMMMYYEAHHHH!**

AFTER ALL, THE **BETTER** THE **REWARD** THE **HARDER** I'LL WORK TO **GET IT!**

AT LEAST THAT'S THE TREND OF THOUGHT **WE** USED ON THOSE LAB RATS IN **PSYCHOLOGY I!**

IT'S PROBABLY ALL AN EXPERIMENT ON ***MOTIVATION*** AND ITS EFFECT BY ***SEXUAL STIMULATION*** WITHIN THE ***MALE*** ANIMAL.

YEAH! THAT'S ***IT!*** THIS IS ALL ONE OF THESE FREAKY ***MASTERS*** AND ***JOHNSON*** EXPERIMENTATION CLINICS.

WHEN I GET ***OUT*** OF THIS ROOM THEY'LL MEASURE MY ***HEARTBEAT*** OR THE SIZE OF MY SWOLLEN LUNGS OR SOME OTHER NONSENSE BEFORE LETTING ME MAKE IT WITH SOME GORGEOUS ***FEMALE*** "GUINEA PIG"

YEAH, ***SHE'S*** PROBABLY IN A ROOM SIMILAR TO ***THIS*** EVEN ***NOW,*** TRYING TO GET AT ***ME!***

DAMNED BUTTONS!

MUST HAVE HIT ***EVERY*** COMBINATION AT ***LEAST TWICE!***

HOPE NOTHING'S ***WRONG!***

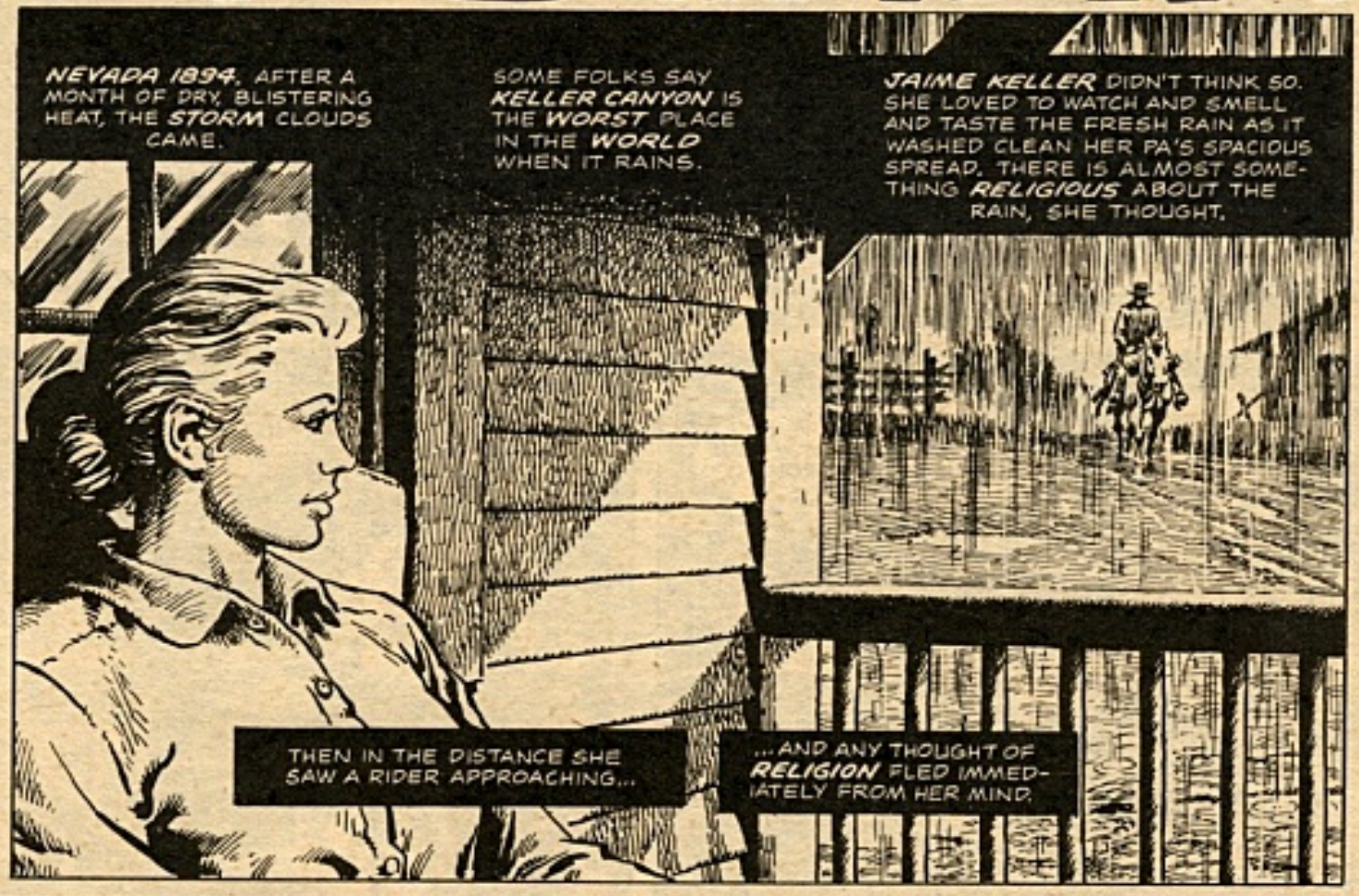
HEY! IT'S WORKING! THE DOOR'S SLIDING BACK! IT'S OPENING! I DID IT!
HUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
WHAT? I-IT'S ANOTHER ROOM, EXACTLY LIKE THE ONE I JUST LEFT!
WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO DO TO ME?
THERE'S NOTHING HERE!
WHAA--? THE DOOR...! IT'S...!
HUMMMMMSSSNNKKK
LET ME OUT!

YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
LRRZZZZZ-AAPPSSSS
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZAPPPPRRRRZZZZAPP
THIS ONE'S INTELLIGENCE IS AVERAGE COMPARED TO THE ONE HUNDRED AND TWO OTHERS TESTED!
A FEW MORE TESTS AND OUR STUDY OF EARTH HUMAN CURIOSITY LEVELS WILL BE COMPLETE!
MOMMY.
MOMMY....!
I'M S-SCARED! DO YOU HEAR ME, MOMMY?
NO, MOMMY DOESN'T HEAR...
...AND NO ONE WILL HEAR... FROM HER, OR FROM THE OTHER ONE HUNDRED AND TWO LAB ANIMALS... EVER AGAIN!

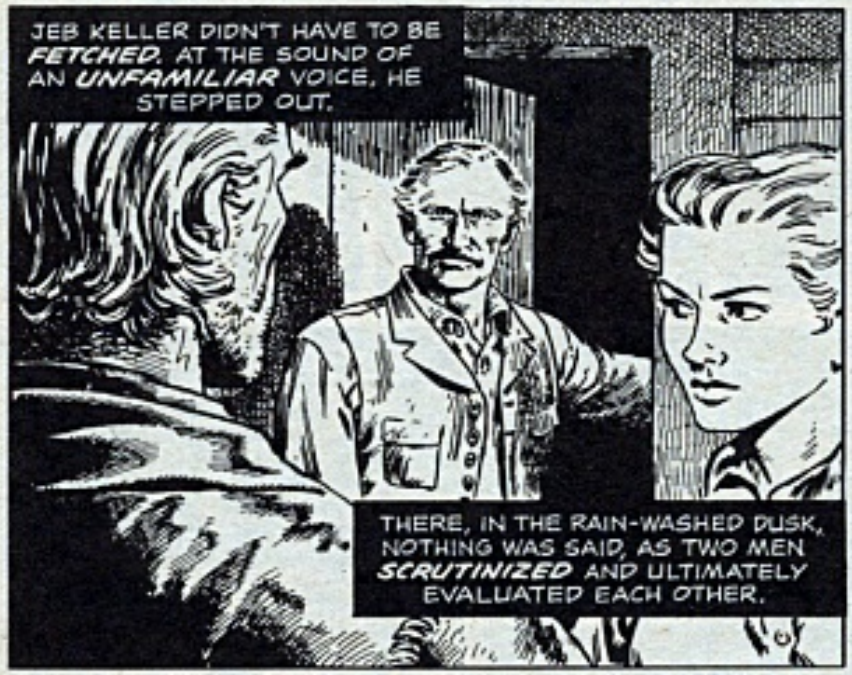
PROLOGUE

EVEN THOUGH IT WAS LONG PAST SUNDOWN, THE AIR WAS DRY AND THE NEVADA SKY REFLECTED THE PROMISE OF TOMORROW'S SIROCCO HEAT.
THE STRANGER RODE SLOWLY, LISTENING TO EACH MEASURED STEP... TO THE GRINDING AND CRUNCHING OF TIMELESS SAND BENEATH STEEL HOOVES...
...AND LOOKING BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, HE SAW SOMETHING THAT, SADLY, WAS NOT AS TIMELESS.
BODY'S STILL WARM! CAN'T BE DEAD MORE'N A HALF HOUR.
THE STRANGER DRANK LONG AND DEEP...
...AND WHEN HE HAD FINISHED, HE MOVED ON.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING



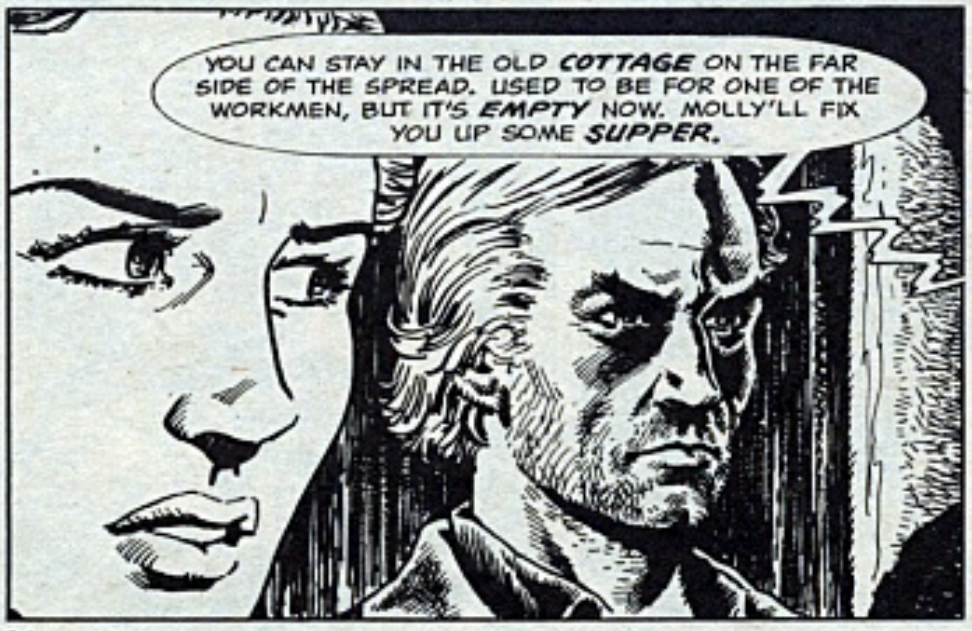
STORY: GERRY BOUDREAU / ART: JOHN SEVERIN

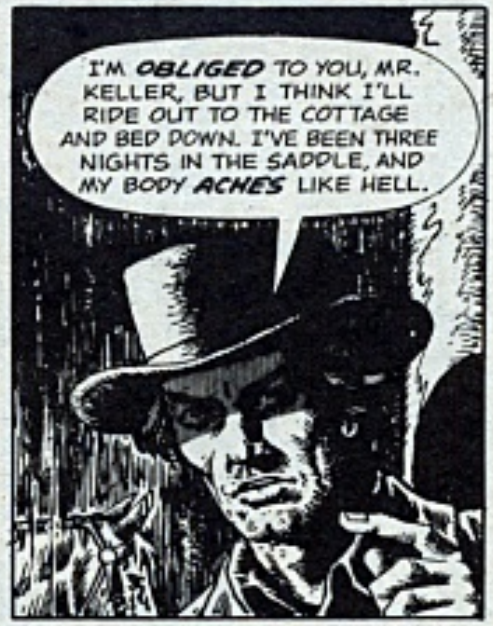

JEB KELLER DIDN'T HAVE TO BE FETCHED. AT THE SOUND OF AN UNFAMILIAR VOICE, HE STEPPED OUT.
THERE, IN THE RAIN-WASHED DUSK, NOTHING WAS SAID, AS TWO MEN SCRUTINIZED AND ULTIMATELY EVALUATED EACH OTHER.

IN JEB KELLER, THE STRANGER SAW A FACE GUTTED WITH WRINKLES... THE PRODUCT OF FORTY YEARS LIVING BY AND FOR THE SOIL. THE HANDS, TOO, WERE CALLUSED AND THE RIDER WONDERED IF THE SCARS PERHAPS TOUCHED HIS HEART AS WELL.
IN THE STRANGER, JEB KELLER SAW ONLY A DRIFTER.

WHAT IS IT YER WANTIN', STRANGER?
A DRY SPOT TO REST MY HEAD. DAMNED RAIN WETS A MAN RIGHT THROUGH TO HIS SOUL.

MUH NAME'S JEB KELLER, AN' LIKE JAIME TOLD YA, I AIN'T FOND OF DRIFTERS.
BUT I SURE WON'T TURN A MAN AWAY IN WEATHER LIKE THIS!


YOU CAN STAY IN THE OLD COTTAGE ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE SPREAD. USED TO BE FOR ONE OF THE WORKMEN, BUT IT'S EMPTY NOW. MOLLY'LL FIX YOU UP SOME SUPPER.


I'M OBLIGED TO YOU, MR. KELLER, BUT I THINK I'LL RIDE OUT TO THE COTTAGE AND BED DOWN. I'VE BEEN THREE NIGHTS IN THE SADDLE, AND MY BODY ACHES LIKE HELL.

MIDNIGHT! THE HOUR OF DARK SENSUALITIES. THE AUTUMN SMELL OF DAMP BIRCH...THE LISTLESS LOWING OF DISTANT CATTLE. MOANING WINDS SEDUCE THE EYE TO TEARS WHICH, IN TURN, FREEZE ON THE CHEEKS.
MIDNIGHT, THE HOUR OF DARK FEAR.

AND IN HER WARM BED, BUT A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, MOLLY KELLER TURNED TO HER HUSBAND.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JEB? YOU SEEM UNEASY!

"I NEVER DID LIKE DRIFTERS, MOLLY! MOST OF 'EM GAMBLE, CHEAT AN' AIN'T NEVER DONE A DECENT DAY'S WORK IN THEIR LIVES!"

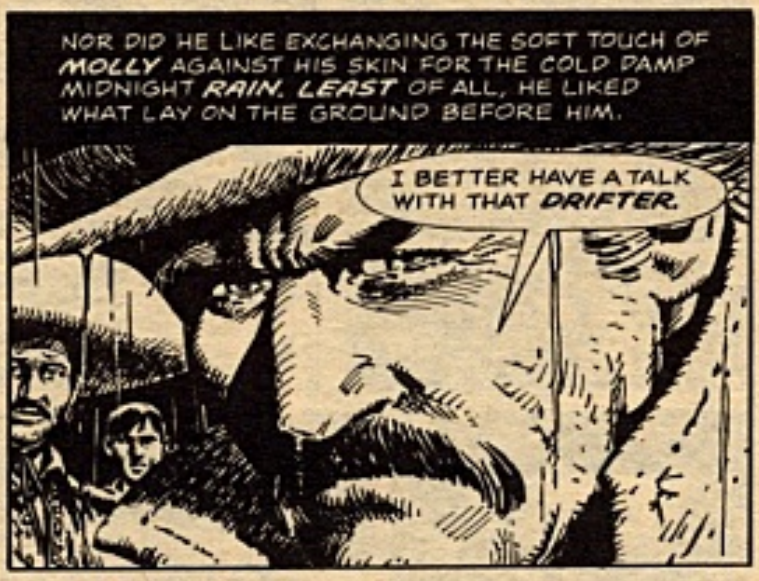
"THERE'S SOMETHIN' DIFFERENT 'BOUT THIS ONE THOUGH, JEB. I CAN'T SAY WHAT, BUT HE AIN'T LIKE ANY MAN I EVER KNOWN."
PAM

NUTTING BUT DE T'UNDER... THAS ALL EET EES!

"...NO...HE SURE AS HELL AIN'T, MOLLY!"

THE LAST SCREAM ECHOES AND DIES ON THE SWEEPING WINDS... THE FINAL SIGH BORN NORTHWARD BY THE PASSING STORM.
LOOK!

EETS PANCHO! D-DEAD!
WE BETTER TELL MEESTER KELLER.
JEB KELLER WAS NOT A HAPPY MAN. HE DIDN'T LIKE BEING AWAKENED AND TAKEN FROM A WARM BED.


NOR DID HE LIKE EXCHANGING THE SOFT TOUCH OF MOLLY AGAINST HIS SKIN FOR THE COLD DAMP MIDNIGHT RAIN. LEAST OF ALL, HE LIKED WHAT LAY ON THE GROUND BEFORE HIM.
I BETTER HAVE A TALK WITH THAT DRIFTER.

JEB DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HE WALKED TO THE COTTAGE. DEFIANCE, MAYBE. ANIMOSITY. PERHAPS NONCOMMITTAL SILENCE.
A MAN O'MINE DIED OUT THERE TONIGHT. KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
NOPE.

SEE FOR YOURSELF. ONE SET OF PRINTS COMING IN... NONE GOING OUT! AIN'T LEFT THE COTTAGE ALL NIGHT.
AH GUESS AH GOTTA BELIEVE YOU.

YOU AIN'T GOTTA BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU DON'T WANT TO. BUT I'M RIGHT SORRY 'BOUT YOUR MAN. IF YOU NEED ANY HELP GIVIN' HIM A GOOD GRAVE --!
"NO," THOUGHT JEB. "HE AIN'T LIKE ANY DRIFTER AH EVER MET."

"I NEED A MAN TO TAKE HIS PLACE," JEB STATED. "YOU WILLIN'?"
"MAYBE," SAID THE STRANGER.

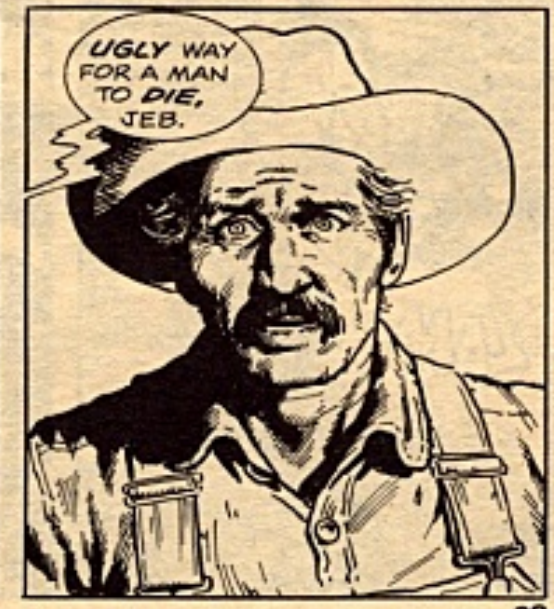
"I WORK NIGHTS," CLAIMED THE DRIFTER. "TELL ME WHAT NEEDS DOIN' AND BY MORNING IT WILL BE FINISHED!"
"BUT I'M NOT TO BE DISTURBED DURING THE DAY."
THOK

"YOU GOT NERVE, MISTER," JEB SAID."
"TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT," THE STRANGER REPLIED. JEB TOOK IT.

DAWN CAME BRINGING THE PROMISE OF A NEW DAY, AND FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF THE OLD.
I'LL BE DAMNED! I GAVE THAT DRIFTER ENOUGH WORK TO KEEP THREE MEN BUSY AND LOOK AT THIS...!

MORNIN', JEB. HEARD WHAT HAPPENED OUT AT AMOS ANDERSON'S LAST NIGHT?
NOPE.

ONE OF THE HANDS WAS MURDERED, DIED JUST AS MYSTERIOUSLY AS PANCHO!
THROAT WAS RIPPED CLEAN OUT!


UGLY WAY FOR A MAN TO DIE, JEB.

SUPPER. THE SMELL OF BEEF STEW STEAMING FROM PORCELAIN BOWLS. A TIME OF INNOCUOUS RETROSPECTIONS.
I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED TO AMOS' MAN.
SOMETHIN' 'BOUT THAT DRIFTER STILL BOTHERS ME.

HE'S STRANGE, ALL RIGHT. BUT AMOS' PLACE IS TWELVE MILES FROM HERE. HE COULDN'A RODE ALL THAT WAY AND FINISHED THE WORK YOU GAVE HIM BESIDES.
JAIME SAT SILENTLY THROUGH THE REST OF THE MEAL...

... FOR SHE ALONE UNDERSTOOD THE POWER, THE LONELINESS HARBORED IN THAT BLACK-CLOTHED BODY. WHATEVER ELSE THE DRIFTER MIGHT BE, HE WAS A MAN. AND JAIME WAS A WOMAN.

OH, GOD...!
FAR FROM IT, YOU POOR SODBUSTER!

BLAM
BLAM

N-NO...!

FOR THIRTEEN NIGHTS THEREAFTER, A PLAGUE OF MURDERS STRUCK THE HIGH PLAINS OF NEVADA.

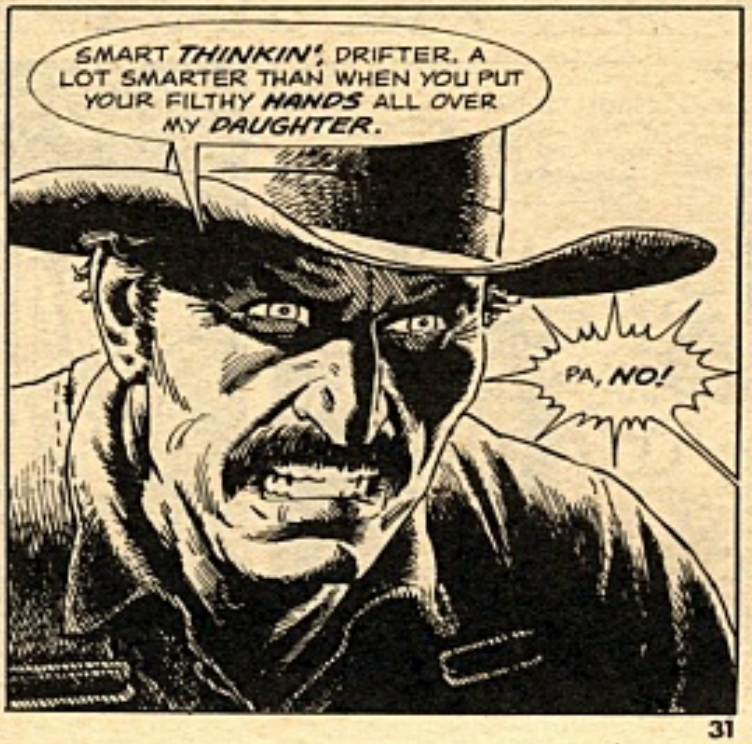
AND FOR THIRTEEN NIGHTS JAIME KELLER THOUGHT ABOUT THE STRANGER...!

I...THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE HUNGRY.

THAT'S NOT WHY YOU'VE COME.

NO.

THE NIGHT PASSED SWIFTLY FOR A SUN THAT WAITED PATIENTLY TO TRANSCEND THE HORIZON. YET JEB'S DAUGHTER NEEDED WAIT NO LONGER!
IT'S TIME YOU WENT BACK, CHILD. YOUR PA'LL BE WAKIN' SOON.


SMART THINKIN', DRIFTER. A LOT SMARTER THAN WHEN YOU PUT YOUR FILTHY HANDS ALL OVER MY DAUGHTER.
PA, NO!

I AIN'T WASTIN' NO GUN ON YOU, MISTER. HATE AND BARE HANDS ARE ALL I NEED TO END YOUR WORTHLESS LIFE!

KLOP

FLASH OF IRONY... THE FANGS OF THE DRIFTER HAVE DRAINED THE LIVES OF THIRTEEN MEN IN AS MANY NIGHTS...
WAK

...AND THIS NIGHT, HE IS CAUGHT AND CONDEMNED FOR HIS ONE, SINGLE ACT OF LOVE...
KRAK

...THE LAST HE SHALL EVER HAVE.

C'MON, JAIME. IT'S TIME YOU WENT BACK TO THE HOUSE.

NOWADAYS, JAIME THINKS MAYBE FOLKS ARE RIGHT. KELLER CANYON IS A LONELY PLACE WHEN IT RAINS...
...FOR RAIN CAN'T WASH AWAY BITTER SWEET MEMORIES NOR PROVIDE A NAME FOR AN UNBORN CHILD.

MY MONSTER... my DAD

STORY: JAN STRNAD / ART: MARTIN SALVADOR

I'M WORRIED ABOUT ROBERT. I'M AFRAID HE'S NEVER GOING TO GET USED TO ME. THE BOY HATES ME.
HE JUST NEEDS TIME, WILLIAM. OUR MARRIAGE HAS BEEN A SHOCK FOR HIM. HE'S PICKED UP A LOT OF BAD IDEAS FROM HIS GRANDMOTHER, BUT HE'S SIMPLY GOT TO ADJUST.

I'M TRYING TO BE PATIENT. BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I CAN TAKE HIS HOSTILITY.
ROBERT'S A STRANGE BOY HE'LL COME AROUND. HE JUST HAS TO DO IT IN HIS OWN WAY, IN HIS OWN TIME.

ROBERT TOSSED FITFULLY AS HIS MIND WANDERED BETWEEN WAKING AND SLEEPING. HIS THOUGHTS FADED AND REAPPEARED LIKE LOST GHOSTS. THE VOICES OF HIS PARENTS ECHOED IN HIS HEAD, DRAWN OUT, DISTORTED, DISTANT.

HE BECAME AWARE OF THE NOISES BEYOND HIS WINDOW... THE CALL OF NIGHT BIRDS AND THE STRIDENT CRIES OF ANIMALS UNKNOWN TO HIM.
HE COULD HEAR HIS PULSE AGAINST THE PILLOW, DEEPENING, SPREADING THROUGH HIS BODY UNTIL THE STEADY POUNDING OF DRUMS PERMEATED THE DAMP NIGHT AIR.

THE AIR WAS CLOSE AND WARM. SUFFOCATING. THE DRUMS WERE LOUDER NOW AND WERE JOINED BY THE SOUND OF VOICES, VOICES LOW AND HOSTILE. CHANTING.
THUM-THUMB-TH
NOOO...!

THE WORDS WERE STRANGE, GUTTURAL SOUNDS WITHOUT SHAPE. BUT ROBERT KNEW THEIR INTENT. THEY WERE RAISING THE UGLY ONE... THE BLACK ONE... THE ONE HE HATED.
THUMA-THUM-THUM-
STOP! PLEASE STOP!

THUMBA-THUMM-TH
AND ROBERT KNEW THAT ONCE RAISED, THE BLACK ONE WOULD KILL HIM!

THEN SUDDENLY...HE WAS FALLING! THE NOISES AROUND HIM DISSOLVED INTO RIPPLES OF SOUND, AND FADED INTO A FARTHER CORNER OF HIS MIND.
N-NOOO!

NOOOOOOO!

IT WAS A NASTY FALL. BUT I THINK HE'S OKAY.
THANK GOD.

I'LL TAKE HIM BACK UP TO BED. BUT WE'D BETTER LEAVE OUR DOOR OPEN AWHILE, JUST IN CASE HE SLEEPWALKS AGAIN.
UHHH...!

NO! LET ME DOWN! LET ME GO! YOU MONSTER!

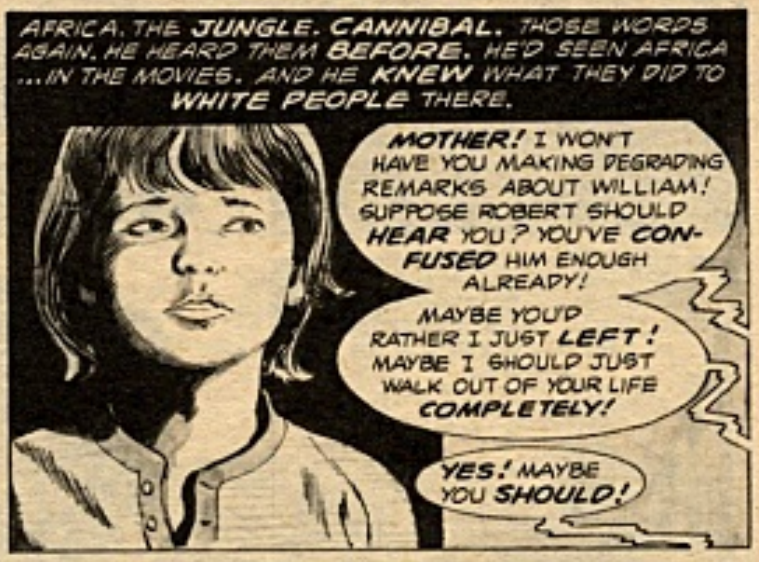
LEAVE ME ALONE!

GIVE HIM TIME, WILLIAM. PLEASE. HE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE MORE TIME.

YOU'D BETTER BE RIGHT, LADY-LOVE. I'M GETTING A LITTLE TIRED OF THIS.

I'M REALLY WORRIED ABOUT ROBERT'S SLEEPWALKING, MOTHER. HE MIGHT HAVE HURT HIMSELF BADLY ON THE STAIRS.
IT'S HAPPENED SEVERAL TIMES NOW. IT'S GETTING SO THAT HE'S AFRAID TO GO TO SLEEP ANYMORE. HE SAYS HE HAS BAD DREAMS. AND HE SEEMS PETRIFIED OF WILLIAM.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU MARRIED THAT NIGGER IN THE FIRST PLACE. ROBERT'S FATHER WAS A GOOD MAN. YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET HIM LEAVE.

ROBERT'S FATHER RAN OUT ON US. WILLIAM IS TWICE THE MAN HE WAS. HE'S GOOD TO US, AND HE CARES.
I LOVE HIM, MOTHER AND ROBERT HAS SIMPLY GOT TO ADJUST TO THE FACT THAT WILLIAM IS BLACK.
HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY LOVE THAT... THAT CANNIBAL? THIS ISN'T AFRICA, YOU KNOW! IT ISN'T THE JUNGLE!


AFRICA. THE JUNGLE. CANNIBAL. THOSE WORDS AGAIN. HE HEARD THEM BEFORE. HE'D SEEN AFRICA ...IN THE MOVIES. AND HE KNEW WHAT THEY DID TO WHITE PEOPLE THERE.
MOTHER! I WON'T HAVE YOU MAKING DEGRADING REMARKS ABOUT WILLIAM! SUPPOSE ROBERT SHOULD HEAR YOU? YOU'VE CONFUSED HIM ENOUGH ALREADY!
MAYBE YOU'D RATHER I JUST LEFT! MAYBE I SHOULD JUST WALK OUT OF YOUR LIFE COMPLETELY!
YES! MAYBE YOU SHOULD!

FROM FAR AWAY HE HEARD THE JUNGLE DRUMS AGAIN. BUT THAT WAS OKAY... YOU ONLY HAD TO WORRY WHEN THEY STOPPED... LIKE WHEN YOU SLEEP. WHEN THEY COME IN THE NIGHT. THEY COME FOR YOU...!
WELL, IF THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL--!
OH MOTHER, YOU'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO PLAY THE MARTYR! CAN'T YOU THINK ABOUT ROBERT FOR A CHANGE?
AND WHO WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT WHEN YOU MARRIED THAT... THAT MONSTER?

ROBERT COULD HEAR THEM ARGUING LONG AFTER HE WENT BACK TO BED. HE COULDN'T MAKE OUT THE WORDS, BUT THEY ECHOED THE MENACING CHANT OF HIS DREAMS...FULL OF HATE AND THREAT, AND ALL OF IT CENTERED AROUND HIMSELF.
HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO OR WHAT TO FEEL. SLOWLY HE RETREATED TO HIS DREAMS...!

AND THEY WERE AFTER HIM AGAIN. HE COULD HEAR THEM BEHIND HIM AS HE PUSHED HIS WAY THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH THAT TORE AT THE LIMBS... THE VINES GRABBED HIM AND TRIED TO HOLD HIM BACK.

HERE WAS NO HUMAN CREATURE, BUT A DEMON SUMMONED FROM HELL... THE INCARNATION OF ALL ROBERT'S FEARS, ALL HIS GRANDMOTHER'S STORIES, ALL THE NAMELESS THINGS ROBERT DIDN'T KNOW AND WAS AFRAID OF.

HERE WAS THE DEVIL, THE BOOGIE-MAN, THE WILD MAN FROM BORNEO, THE JUNGLE CREATURE HIS MOTHER HAD MARRIED, AND ROBERT WAS TRAPPED.

IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW, ROBERT. IT WAS JUST A DREAM. IT'S ALL OVER!

WE'LL LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN AGAIN, SON, SO WE CAN HEAR YOU. IF YOU NEED US, WE'RE RIGHT HERE.

HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
I HOPE SO, WILLIAM. I HOPE SO!

ROBERT NEVER WALKED IN HIS SLEEP BEFORE I CAME, DID HE? IT'S MY FAULT.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. IT'S HIS. IT'S ALL IN HIS HEAD. BUT HE'LL COME AROUND HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES. HE'S GOT TO ADJUST. HE CAN'T KEEP THIS UP FOREVER.

"HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE SITUATION. SOONER OR LATER, HE'LL SIMPLY HAVE TO LIVE WITH THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE."

"I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF HE'S EVER GOING TO ACCEPT ME. IT WORRIES ME."

"HE WILL, WILLIAM. SOMEHOW."

SLEEP. DREAMS. AND ROBERT WAS BACK AGAIN, IN THE JUNGLE. ONLY THIS TIME, SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT. THERE WAS A GOOD FEELING.

THIS TIME HE WASN'T DEFENSELESS. THIS TIME HE HAD A WEAPON. AND THAT WOULD MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD.

THEY WERE ASLEEP. THEY DIDN'T EXPECT HIM BACK SO SOON. IT WAS THE CHANCE ROBERT NEEDED TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT AGAIN... TO GET RID OF THE EVIL BEING THAT HAD ENTERED AND DISRUPTED HIS LIFE.
SILENTLY HE ENTERED THE BLACK ONE'S HUT.

HE MIGHT NEVER HAVE THIS CHANCE AGAIN. IF HE DIDN'T WIN TONIGHT, HE'D HAVE TO RETURN TOMORROW NIGHT AND THE NIGHT AFTER AND FOREVER, OR UNTIL HE WAS KILLED BY THE BLACK ONE.
HIS HAND BEGAN TO SWEAT AS HE GRIPPED THE KNIFE TIGHTLY.

AND SLOWLY... EVER SO SLOWLY AND QUIETLY, HE RAISED HIS BLADE OVER THE MONSTER'S FACE AND NECK!

UHMMM... W-WHAA--? WHO'S THERE...?

ONLY ME, MONSTER!

THE BLACK ONE JERKED SPASMODICALLY. BUT THE CRY OF PAIN DIED IN HIS THROAT AS ROBERT PLUNGED AND RIPPED WITH THE KNIFE.

THEN... ALL WAS STILL.

IN A MATTER OF SECONDS, IT HAD BEEN DONE. THE BLACK ONE WAS DEAD.

ROBERT FELT THE WORLD LOSING SUBSTANCE AROUND HIM. THE DREAMWORLD WAS VANISHING, NEVER TO RETURN...NEVER TO BOTHER HIM AGAIN.
HE HAD BEEN TORMENTED, BUT HE HAD FOUGHT. AND HE HAD WON.

HE FOUND HIMSELF BACK HOME, CLIMBING INTO A BED THAT WAS SOFT AND WARM AND COMFORTING. SOMEWHERE HE HEARD A WOMAN SCREAM, AGAIN AND AGAIN.
BUT HE WAS TIRED, SO VERY TIRED...!

HIS PILLOW FELT GOOD BENEATH HIS HEAD AND THE COVERS HELD HIM IN A HUGE, REASSURING EMBRACE.
HIS WORRIES WERE OVER NOW. HE WELCOMED THE DROWSINESS THAT STOLE OVER HIM, CUTTING HIM OFF FROM THE SCREAMS THAT BLURRED JUST BEYOND HIS CONSCIOUSNESS.

SOON THE TRUTH WOULD REACH HIS MOTHER'S MIND AND SHE WOULD CRY AGAIN, THIS TIME NOT FOR HER HUSBAND, BUT FOR HER SON.
THEN SHE WOULD WALK SLOWLY, RESOLUTELY, TO ROBERT'S BEDROOM...

...AND SHE WOULD FIND HIM SAFELY IN BED, THE COVERS PULLED SNUGLY UP TO HIS CHIN AS HE ENJOYED A QUIET, DREAMLESS SLEEP.

PROLOGUE

IT BEGAN IN DARKNESS...

...AND IN DARKNESS IT SHALL END!

STORY: DOUG MOENCH / ART: VINCENTE ALCAZAR

I UNDERSTAND YOUR GRIEF, PETER. I FULLY SYMPATHIZE. BUT YOU MUST REALIZE A MANIAC HAS BEEN AT WORK.
HER BLOOD WAS DRAINED... HER THROAT SLASHED! AND ALL YOU POLICE CAN DO IS HIDE BEHIND YOUR MODERN ENLIGHTENED "REASONING!"

COME, MY BOY... PLEASE COME TO MY OFFICE WITH ME.

PETER, THESE ARE MODERN TIMES... WITH MODERN POLICE METHODS. MY MEN FOUND FINGERPRINTS... LIKE THESE IN ROWENA'S BEDROOM.
THE METHOD WAS SHOWN TO US BY ENGLAND'S SCOTLAND YARD. IT HAS PROVEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN IDENTIFYING CRIMINALS.

EVEN NOW, WE ARE ROUNDING UP ALL SUSPICIOUS PERSONS AND TAKING THEIR PRINTS...FOR COMPARISON WITH THE MURDERER'S!
POLIZEI
YOU CAN EMPLOY ALL THE MODERN AND EFFICIENT METHODS YOU LIKE COMMISSIONER...
...BUT NONE OF THEM WILL CHANGE THE FACT THAT EUROPE STILL LIVES UNDER THE SHADOW OF ANCIENT EVIL!

ROWENA WAS KILLED AND DEFILED, BY THE KISS OF A VAMPIRE!
WILL YOU FINGERPRINT THE NIGHT, COMMISSIONER? THE MIST? THE BATS AND VERMIN?

I'M SORRY IF I'VE BEEN HARSH, COMMISSIONER, BUT IT HAS BEEN A LONG DAY.
I GO NOW TO RELATE THIS TRAGEDY TO RUGER. WE BOTH LOVED ROWENA... BUT NOW, NEITHER OF US SHALL HAVE HER!

SO YOU SEE, RUGER, THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE THE FIEND RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS ATROCITY... IS A VAMPIRE!
INTERESTING, PETER!
II
III
IV
BUT DON'T YOU THINK THE IDEA OF A VAMPIRE IN THIS DAY AND AGE IS A BIT ARCHAIC? AFTER ALL, IT IS 1893!
WHAT IS TIME TO A VAMPIRE? A VAMPIRE IS IMMORTAL, RUGER... SO LONG AS HE SUCKS THE LIFE FROM OTHERS, OR...
...UNTIL HE IS STOPPED... WITH A STAKE OF BIRCH IMPALED THROUGH HIS HEART!
THE HOLY CRUCIFIX, TOO, IS A WEAPON THAT WILL CONSUME THE VAMPIRE'S FILTHY SOUL!
YOU CERTAINLY ARE WELL-VERSED IN THE LORE, PETER. THE QUESTION IS WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO?
ONLY THIS, YOU FILTH!
HAH! YOU RECOIL AT THE SIGHT OF THE SACRED CROSS?! I SUSPECTED YOU MIGHT!
I AM WELL-VERSED IN VAMPIRIC KNOWLEDGE, FRIEND RUGER... ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT EVEN THE MIRROR SHIRKS THE SIGHT OF YOUR KIND!
YOU WOULD HAVE DONE WELL TO AVOID THE GLASS!
BUT NOW IT IS TOO LATE FOR YOU!
IT IS NEVER TOO LATE, PETER!
CRASH!

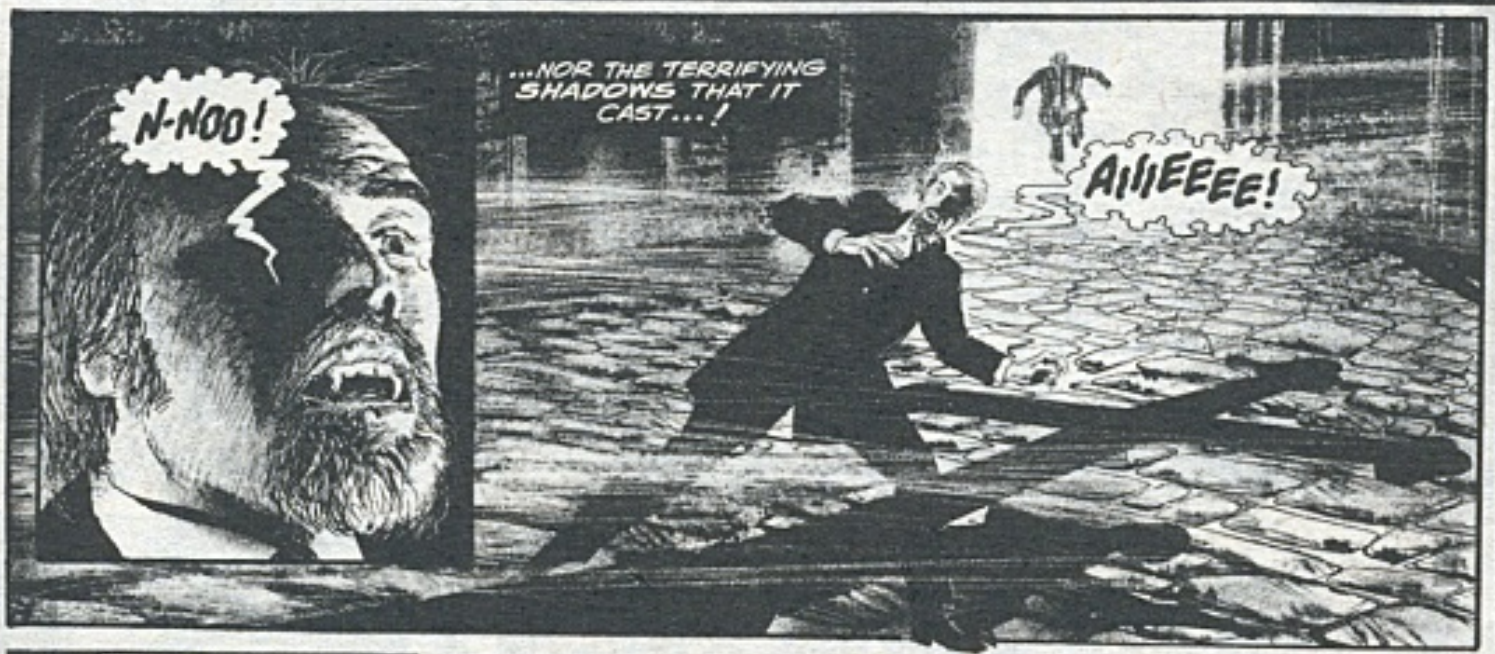
YOU WILL NOT ESCAPE ME, RUGER!
I WILL FOLLOW YOU 'TIL MY DYING BREATH!

PETER! I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU!
WE KNOW WHO THE MURDERER IS! THE FINGERPRINTS MATCH THOSE OF YOUR FRIEND, RUGER!

I HAVE ALREADY SENT MEN TO ARREST--!
PETER... STOP!
YOU'RE TOO LATE! YOU FOOL! RUGER'S GETTING AWAY!

THE CHASE WOUND THROUGH THE DARKEST CORNERS OF THE VILLAGE...

...NEITHER MAN PAYING HEED TO ANYTHING BUT THE OTHER!
NEITHER SEEING NOR CARING ABOUT THE LUSH, FULL MOON THAT SHONE BRIGHTLY THAT NIGHT...


N-NOO!
...NOR THE TERRIFYING SHADOWS THAT IT CAST...!
AIIIEEEEE!

AAIEE! AIEEE! AIEE!

DOES THE SIMPLE SHADOW OF A CHAPEL'S CROSS BRING YOU TORMENT, OLD FRIEND?

FTANG!
THEN PERHAPS I AM DOING YOU A FAVOR!
AGGK-K-K--!

AAAAHHHHH
X
IT BEGAN IN DARKNESS...
...AND FOR RUGER VON DAEMON, IN DARKNESS IT SHALL END!
FINGERPRINT HIM! BOOK HIM!
THE GUY'S A MANIAC!
THEY PULLED HIM OFF SOME POOR WORKMAN. HE WAS TEARING THE MAN'S THROAT OUT WITH HIS TEETH!
THE VICTIM'S LUCKY TO BE ALIVE... BUT SEEMS TO HAVE GONE INSANE FROM THE SHOCK!

RATHER STRANGE CASE, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S NOT THE HALF OF IT!
THE FELLOW THIS GUY ATTACKED WAS PLOUGHING UP THE GROUNDS AROUND THE OLD CHAPEL.
HE CLAIMS TO HAVE FOUND A BURIED SKELETON!
IT SOUNDS LIKE... A RESURRECTED VAMPIRE TALE!
THERE WAS SUPPOSEDLY A WOODEN CROSS WEDGED IN THE SKELETON'S RIBS...
...AND WHEN HE REMOVED THE CROSS, SUDDENLY THIS GUY... FROM NOWHERE... WAS ATTACKING HIS THROAT. CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?
VAMPIRE?! COME ON, INGELS! THIS IS 1975!
YEAH! I KNOW! THE MODERN ENLIGHTENED AGE. BUT THERE'S ANOTHER THING I KNOW. ANCIENT EVIL STILL STALKS EUROPE.
HEY, INGELS! THE BOYS IN THE LAB JUST TURNED UP SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE!
A CHECK ON THE NEW PRISONER'S FINGERPRINTS ESTABLISH HIS IDENTITY AS ONE RUGER VON DAEMON!
HE'S BEEN DECEASED FOR ALMOST A CENTURY!
STOP JOKING, INGELS. THIS CRIMINAL IS SIMPLY A PSYCHOPATH! NOTHING MORE!

AND THAT'S NOT ALL...! WE JUST DEVELOPED HIS MUG SHOTS... ONLY HE DIDN'T WANT TO DEVELOP!

IF THE VAMPIRE CASTS NO REFLECTION IN A MIRROR, AS MY GRANDFATHER PETER HAS TOLD ME, THEN WHY SHOULD HE BE EXPECTED TO PHOTOGRAPH?
EEEEE!
EH?! THAT'S BURGOS! HE WAS JAILING THE PRISONER!

THEN IT IS AS I HAVE SAID...

...ANCIENT EVIL STILL STALKS EUROPE.

"SOON, ALL OF THE WORLD SHALL FALL BENEATH ITS SHADOW!"

"AND IT CAN ONLY END IN DARKNESS!"

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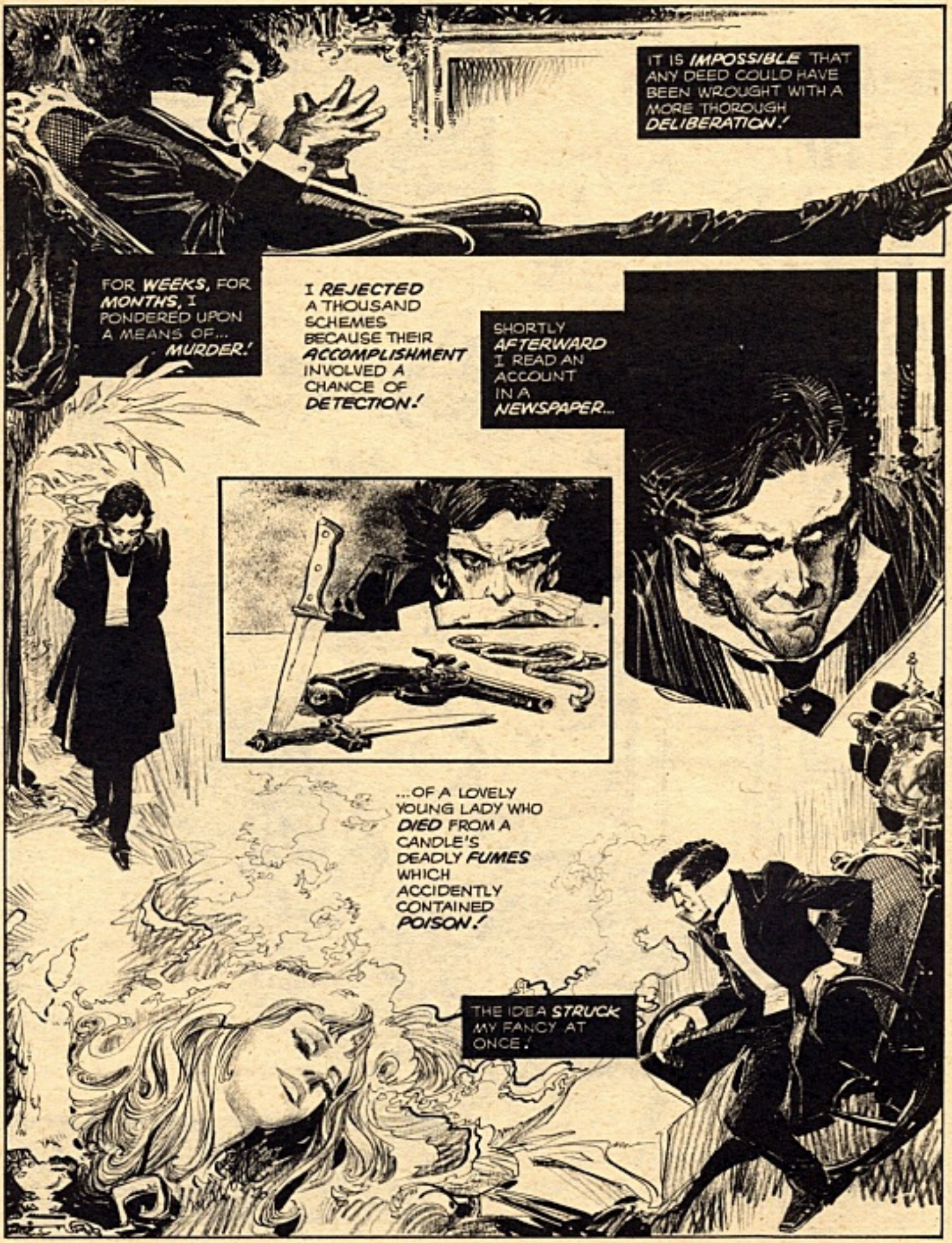
ADAPTATION: RICH MARGOPOULOS / ART: LUIS BERMEJO


IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT ANY DEED COULD HAVE BEEN WROUGHT WITH A MORE THOROUGH DELIBERATION!
FOR WEEKS, FOR MONTHS, I PONDERED UPON A MEANS OF... MURDER!
I REJECTED A THOUSAND SCHEMES BECAUSE THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT INVOLVED A CHANCE OF DETECTION!
SHORTLY AFTERWARD I READ AN ACCOUNT IN A NEWSPAPER...
...OF A LOVELY YOUNG LADY WHO DIED FROM A CANDLE'S DEADLY FUMES WHICH ACCIDENTLY CONTAINED POISON!
THE IDEA STRUCK MY FANCY AT ONCE!

I KNEW MY INTENDED VICTIM'S HABIT OF READING IN BED!
I KNEW, TOO, THAT HIS TURRET-CHAMBER WAS SMALL AND ILL-VENTILATED!
BUT, I NEED NOT DISTRACT YOU WITH IMPERTINENT DETAILS CONCERNING MY CRIME!
I NEED NOT DESCRIBE THE EASY ARTIFICES BY WHICH I SUBSTITUTED IN HIS BEDROOM, A WAX-LIGHT OF MY OWN MAKING FOR THE ONE WHICH I THERE FOUND!
GACK-KK

THE VERY NEXT MORNING, MY UNCLE WAS DISCOVERED DEAD IN HIS BED, AND THE CORONER'S VERDICT WAS...
...DEATH BY THE VISITATION OF GOD!
HAVING INHERITED HIS ESTATE, ALL WENT WELL WITH ME FOR YEARS!
THE IDEA OF DETECTION NEVER ONCE ENTERED MY BRAIN!
OF THE REMAINS OF THE FATAL TAPER I HAD CAREFULLY DISPOSED!
I HAD LEFT NO SHADOW OF A CLUE BY WHICH IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO CONVICT OR EVEN SUSPECT ME OF A CRIME!
IT IS INCONCEIVABLE HOW RICH A SENTIMENT OF SATISFACTION AROSE IN MY BOSOM AS I REFLECTED UPON MY ABSOLUTE SECURITY!
FOR AN EXTREMELY LONG TIME I WAS ACCUSTOMED TO REVEL IN THIS SMUG MOOD!
I AM SAFE!
IT AFFORDED ME MORE DELIGHT THAN ALL THE MERE WORLDLY ADVANTAGES I HAD ACCRUED FROM MY DEARLY BELOVED AND LONG-DEPARTED UNCLE!

BUT THERE ARRIVED AFTER A WHILE, AN EPOCH FROM WHICH THE PLEASURABLE FEELING GREW, BY SCARCELY PERCEPTIBLE GRADATIONS, INTO A HAUNTING AND HARASSING THOUGHT!
I AM SAFE!!
I COULD BARELY GET RID OF THOSE TORMENTING WORDS FOR EVEN AN INSTANT!
I AM SAFE!!
IN THIS MANNER, I WOULD PERPETUALLY CATCH MYSELF PONDERING UPON MY SECURITY BY CEASELESSLY REPEATING...
I AM SAFE I AM SAFE
I AM SAFEIAMSAFEIAMSAFEIAMSAFEIAMSAFE!
I MUST REMEMBER THAT I AM SAFE... ONLY IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING FOOLISH... LIKE MAKING A CONFESSION IN PUBLIC!
ONE DAY, WHILST SAUNTERING ALONG THE STREET, I ARRESTED MYSELF IN THE ACT OF MURMURING, HALF ALOUD, THOSE CUSTOMARY SYLLABLES!
I AM SA--!
HAVE TO GET AN IRON GRIP ON MYSELF!

AND NOW MY OWN CASUAL SELF-SUGGESTION THAT I MIGHT POSSIBLY BE FOOL ENOUGH TO CONFESS THE MURDER OF WHICH I HAD BEEN GUILTY...

AT FIRST, I MADE AN EFFORT TO SHAKE OFF THIS NIGHTMARE OF THE SOUL! I WALKED VIGOROUSLY...

I FELT A MADDENING DESIRE TO SHRIEK ALOUD!

EVERY SUCCEEDING WAVE OF THOUGHT OVERWHELMED ME WITH NEW TERROR, FOR ALAS I TOO-WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT TO EVEN REMOTELY CONTEMPLATE CONFESSING IN MY PRESENT STATE OF MIND, WAS TO BE LOST!

I BOUNDED LIKE A MANIAC THROUGH THE CROWDED STREETS!
AT LENGTH, THE POPULACE BECAME ALARMED AT MY FRANTIC ACTIONS... AND PURSUED ME!

COULD I HAVE SOMEHOW TORN OUT MY TONGUE, I WOULD HAVE DONE SO!
...WITHOUT WARNING, THE LONG-IMPRISONED SECRET BURST FORTH FROM BETWEEN MY LIPS!
I DID IT! IT WAS ME! I KILLED HIM!
FOR A MOMENT I EXPERIENCED ALL THE PANGS OF SUFFOCATION! I BECAME BLIND AND DEAF AND GIDDY! THEN...

THEY SAY THAT I SPOKE WITH A DISTINCT ENUNCIATION, AND WITH A PASSIONATELY HURRIED PACE...
...AS IF IN FEAR OF INTERRUPTION BEFORE CONCLUDING THE BRIEF BUT PREGNANT SENTENCES THAT CONSIGNED ME TO THE HANGMAN AND HELL!

HAVING RELATED ALL THAT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE FULLEST JUDICIAL CONVICTION, I FELL PROSTRATE IN A SWOON!

BUT, WHY SHALL I SAY MORE? TODAY I WEAR THESE CHAINS, AND I AM HERE! TOMORROW, I SHALL NOT EXIST!
I WILL HAVE PAID IN FULL FOR MY PERVERSITY!

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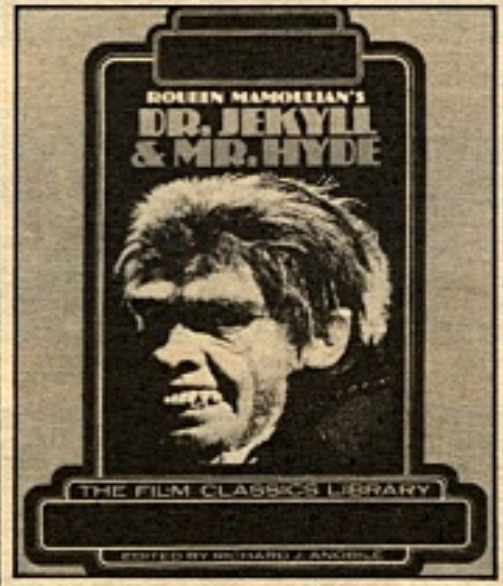

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